(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the bottlenecks in settlement of telephone bills using online banking facilities; and

(d) the steps taken to streamline the procedure of online settlement of telephone bills?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) and (b) Since 1.10.2000, the Government is no longer providing telephone services. These are provided by the public sector undertakings, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited and Mahanagar Telephones Nigam Limited as well as private operators. The existing guidelines of BSNL and MTNL envisage online payments of telephone bills through authorized banks. No problem of online payments have come to notice where bills been paid through the authorized banks.

(a) There are no fundamental bottlenecks in settling telephone bills using an online banking facility, provided the payment is made by the subscriber to such banks authorized by the local telephone authority.

(b) Does not arise.

Reduction in STD rates by BSNL

2974. DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state;

(a) whether there is any proposal to reduce the rates of STD by BSNL;

(b) if so, the extent of such reduction; and

(c) by when the new rates would be given effect to?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) The STD rates were last reduced by BSNL with effect from 07.03.2003. At present no proposal for further reduction in the STD rates is under consideration.

(b) and (c) Do not arise in view of (a) above.